

**CITY OF ROCKVILLE PLANNING DIVISION
STAFF REPORT**

January 25, 2001

SUBJECT:

Comprehensive Planned Development Detailed Application CPD2000-0001I,
Tower Oaks South Gateway Site

Applicant: Tower Dawson Limited Partnership
11501 Huff Court
North Bethesda, Maryland 20895

Date Filed: December 21, 2000

Property Location: Southwest corner of Tower Oaks Boulevard and Wootton Parkway

Planning Commission Review Date: January 31, 2001

REQUEST:

The applicant seeks Detailed Application approval for a 450,000 square foot complex, including an office building with associated trading floor and support services building, to be built as part of the Tower Oaks Comprehensive Planned Development.



PREVIOUS RELATED ACTION:

- Comprehensive Planned Development Application CPD-1-85, (Concept Plan) - to determine the land uses and development potential for the Tower Oaks development; approved by the Mayor and Council on October 12, 1987.
- Comprehensive Planned Development Application CPD-1-85, Amendment - to delete planned lake from site plan and reallocate development densities; approved by the Mayor and Council on September 27, 1993.
- Comprehensive Planned Development Detailed Applications CPD-1-88A through CPD2000-0001H – for approval of roads, 136 townhouses and three office buildings totaling 646,600 square feet within Tower Oaks.
- Schematic Design Plan for office building development covered by CPD2000-0001I; presented to the Mayor and Council on November 27, 2000.
- Comprehensive Planned Development Concept Plan Amendment Application CPD1985-0001B,

Boston Properties LP – to transfer 45,000 square feet of office space and 15,000 square feet of restaurant space to Development Areas 5 and 6 of Tower Oaks, and to allow mechanical equipment space located in basements to not count toward floor area calculations; approved by the Mayor and Council on January 8, 2001.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Approval, subject to the following conditions:

1. Submission, for approval of the Chief of Planning, of eleven (11) copies of the site plan, revised according to Planning Commission Exhibit A, to show the following:
 - a. Separation of the main entrance driveway sidewalk from the curb by a grass strip of a minimum width of three feet; and
 - b. An increase in the pavement width of the south driveway to 26 feet without a striped bicycle lane; and
 - c. Signage and installation of pavement markings, as recommended by the Department of Public Works.
2. Submission, for the approval of the Chief of Planning, of eleven (11) copies of a detailed landscaping plan, revised according to Planning Commission Exhibit B, to show the following:
 - a. Changes to final landscape plan planting choices per City Forester directives.
3. Submission, for approval of the City Forester, of a Final Forest Conservation Plan for the site in accordance with the Forest and Tree Preservation Ordinance. This plan should be coordinated with the approved Preliminary Forest Conservation Plan (PFCP), landscape plan, public and private improvements and sediment control plans.
4. Submission, for the approval of the Department of Public Works, of the following detailed plans and studies:
 - a. Public water and sewer plans with profiles, service connections and sewer easements adjusted per Public Works Department requirements, on City standard base sheets.;
 - b. Plans for stormwater management, sediment control and storm drainage for adequate conveyance of stormwater, all with computations and proposed easements; and
 - c. Public storm drain and paving plans, including profiles, on City standard base sheets.
5. Approval of a Final Record Plat application for the property, showing all necessary easements and dedications.
6. Submission, for the approval of the Chief of Planning, of a phased parking plan, indicating that

adequate parking will be provided on the site during all phases of development. The plan shall include a written description outlining the operation of the valet parking system, if employed.

7. That utility cuts in public streets be milled and overlaid.
8. That carpool spaces be provided and designated at priority locations within the parking garage.
9. That the applicant provide, at the request of the City, a bus shelter or equivalent amount of cash contribution toward installation of a bus shelter to serve the project.
10. That the architectural treatment and materials of the parking garage exterior, including grilles or similar elements in the garage openings, be compatible with the building façade.
11. That all structures meet the requirements of the City's construction codes, the Fire and Life Safety Codes, Maryland Building Code for the Handicapped and Federal ADA requirements.
12. That permits for any signs be obtained from the Division of Inspection Services, according to guidelines established in the approved comprehensive sign package.
13. That bonds be posted and permits obtained from the Department of Public Works, or other agencies, as necessary.

BACKGROUND:

The Mayor and Council adopted the governing Master Plan (Planning Area 12 Neighborhood Plan) in 1985, establishing the future development pattern for the planning area as a campus office park development. The subject property is in the O-3 (Restricted Office) Zone, where a Comprehensive Planned Development is permitted when recommended by the Master Plan. In 1987, the Mayor and Council approved the Comprehensive Planned Development Concept Plan Application (CPD-1-85), authorizing development of the 192-acre Westmont Tract (now known as Tower Oaks) as an office park containing 2.5 million square feet of floor area and a residential component of up to 275 dwelling units.

The Planning Commission has approved several Detailed Applications within Tower Oaks, including the construction of infrastructure improvements such as Tower Oaks Boulevard and Preserve Parkway; the 136 unit townhouse community known as The Villages at Tower Oaks; the 185,000 square foot office building at 2600 Tower Oaks Boulevard being developed by Boston Properties, Inc.; the 276,600 square foot Tower Building, now under construction at 1101 Wootton Parkway; and the future One Preserve Parkway building of 185,000 square feet to be constructed by Boston Properties.

The original Concept Plan approval for Tower Oaks was modified by the Mayor and Council in 1993 to delete the original lake. Development staging was also established by the Mayor and Council in the approval. If development proceeds in accordance with the terms and conditions of the approved Concept Plan with regard to density and land use mix, no further traffic impact studies are necessary. As part of the resolution of approval, the Mayor and Council retained approval authority over schematic building designs prior to submission of the Detailed Applications for any development in Tower Oaks.

The Mayor and Council approved the schematic building design for this office proposal on November 27, 2000. The building design submitted for this application is substantially the same as the design approved by the Mayor and Council.

ANALYSIS:

Property Description:

The subject property is a 10.17-acre site located at the southwest corner of Wootton Parkway and Tower Oaks Boulevard. The site is completely wooded with second growth forest and begins to slope gradually downward to the south along Tower Oaks Boulevard. The site is roughly triangular in shape, and is bounded by Wootton Parkway on the north, Tower Oaks Boulevard on the east and south, and Interstate 270 on the west. Across Tower Oaks Boulevard to the east is the undeveloped portion of Development Area 4 in Tower Oaks, which is approved under the Concept Plan for office, hotel and health and fitness establishment uses. To the north across Wootton Parkway is Development Area 2, which is occupied by the Tower Building.

Development Proposal:

The applicant proposes to construct a complex consisting of three distinct components: a ten-story, 279,165 square foot office building, a 136,306 square foot, two-story trading floor building and a 34,526 square foot, two-story support services building. The buildings are organized around a paved pedestrian plaza, which serves as the main pedestrian entrance to the complex.

The project is being constructed for PG&E National Energy Group (PG&E NEG), an energy services firm currently located in downtown Bethesda. PG&E NEG will operate a trading floor for commodities trading, in addition to locating their corporate headquarters on the site. Underneath the trading floor will be a data center to support the trading floor's operation. The support services building will include other functions necessary to support the trading floor, such as food service. The trading floor building will comprise Phase I of the project, while Phase II will be the support services building, and Phase III will be the office building. If the project is approved, occupancy of Phase I is planned to occur by the end of 2001. Phase II will be completed at the same time or shortly after Phase I. Occupancy of Phase III is expected to follow Phase II by approximately one year.

All parking in the complex will be provided in a parking structure both above and below grade, to be constructed beneath the support services building, plaza and office building. Two vehicular entrances into the site, located at median breaks along Tower Oaks Boulevard, will provide access to the parking garage. The entrance opposite the northern median break on Tower Oaks Boulevard will be the primary vehicular entrance for southbound traffic, and will be able to take advantage of a dedicated deceleration lane already constructed along Tower Oaks Boulevard. Further south, access to the rear portion of the parking garage and service functions will be provided at a median break via a driveway parallel to I-270.

Architectural Analysis:

The complex is designed to be composed of three distinct functional elements, yet be an integrated

design through common architectural elements and materials. The office building will be ten stories, located at the southern end of the site. The majority of the building will be precast concrete and glass with metal accents. The office building will include large expanses of tinted glass on the long facades, contrasting with precast panels defining the windows on the shorter facades. The consistency of form on this site as well as the trellises around the projecting rooftop elements represent a unifying theme among the three buildings. The building forms will be rectangular, and provide a contrast compared to the curving forms of the Tower Building and Boston Properties' 2600 Tower Oaks Boulevard.

At 450,000 square feet, the entire complex could be quite massive. However, its potential bulk is reduced because the floor area has been distributed among three buildings. The office building, the largest of the structures, has been sited away from the closest residential neighborhoods. Compared with the nearby Tower Building, the office building will be approximately the same width but not as long due to its more compact floor plan, although it will be slightly larger in terms of floor area.

Although the office building is ten stories, it will not reach the 125 foot height limit for Tower Oaks. However, the two projecting elements on the roof, which are mechanical equipment screens, exceed the height limit. Under the Zoning Ordinance, this is permissible subject to certain criteria, including that no rooftop structure exceed 25 percent of the roof area, and that equipment enclosures be set back from the edge of the roof by a 1:1 setback to height ratio. Staff finds that the mechanical equipment enclosures cover approximately 30 percent and are not set back from the roof edge, and therefore do not meet these requirements. However, the Planning Commission may authorize a variance of these requirements if it can be determined that the rooftop structure is compatible with the building and not contrary to the intent of the Master Plan or Zoning Ordinance. Staff recommends that a variance of these requirements be granted, as the enclosures are clearly an integral part of the overall building design.

Another design feature is the location of the loading dock, which is located along the I-270 side of the building. Two loading docks are provided to serve the trading floor and office building, respectively. The combined loading dock area will not be visible from adjacent roadways as it is in an excavated area buttressed by a large retaining wall. The retaining wall will be terraced and planted with Leyland Cypress and other shrubs to further the screening effect. The design takes advantage of the grade changes associated with Wootton Parkway and I-270 to significantly reduce the visual impact of the service areas. In addition, dumpsters will be located in the enclosed service areas of the building.

Staff is concerned about the visual impact of the parking garage, which will be located primarily beneath the building, but will be visible from the public roadway due to its close proximity. The garage is designed to be an integral part of the overall building, as the same precast materials will be employed. However, staff is concerned that any architectural treatment of the garage's openings, such as metal grilles, also be architecturally compatible with the remainder of the building. Staff has recommended a condition of approval to that effect.

Parking Analysis:

The applicant proposes to construct a multi-level parking garage, to be located beneath the support services building, the paved plaza and the office building. A portion of the parking garage will extend beyond the limits of the office building on the south side. The garage will contain all of the 1,551

parking spaces to be provided. According to Zoning Ordinance requirements, a total of 1,500 spaces are required, resulting in an excess of 51 parking spaces provided. The resulting parking ratio will be 3.45 per 1,000 square feet, as compared to the 3.3 spaces per 1,000 square feet resulting from the Ordinance requirement. Twenty-seven handicapped spaces are required, and provided in the parking garage.

A staff concern has been whether the office parking requirement of the City's Zoning Ordinance applies to the trading floor and the support services building. There is no separate parking standard for a trading floor, so staff requested that the applicant justify the amount of parking required for the trading floor and support services buildings. The applicant provided justification based on the amount of employees that will occupy the trading floor and support services building (See Attachment 5). Based on expected occupancy figures for the trading floor, the amount of employees in the trading floor and support services buildings combined should be equivalent to the same amount of office space. Staff has therefore accepted the office parking standard for the trading floor and support services building.

The applicant intends to occupy the trading floor and support services building (Phase II) in advance of the completion of the office building and the parking garage to be built in Phase III. Parking will be available in the garage constructed in Phase II and temporarily in the plaza drop-off area. Staff has requested that a parking plan be provided that demonstrates that adequate parking will be provided on site upon completion of Phases I and II of the complex. In the event that a valet system is employed, staff recommends a condition of approval that this plan be provided for the approval of the Chief of Planning.

Forest/Tree Preservation and Landscaping:

The City Forester has accepted the Forest Stand Delineation and Preliminary Forest Conservation Plan for the overall Tower Oaks property. As a requirement for site grading permits, the applicant has submitted and received approval of a detailed Forest Conservation Plan for this site along with the required maintenance, management and preservation agreements. The subject site will include approximately 26,500 square feet (.61 acres) devoted to tree preservation, provided at the northeast and northwest corners of the site. The limited amount of surface parking, underground stormwater management and building siting has helped the applicant to preserve a portion of the site in forest. This is noteworthy because no forest conservation is required on this site based on the approved Preliminary Forest Conservation Plan for the entire Tower Oaks CPD.

The site will be heavily landscaped. The forest conservation areas will be supplemented by trees and shrubs appropriate to the forest edge. More formalized landscaped areas will occur in the terraces and areas adjacent to the buildings. These areas will be planted with a combination of shrubs and smaller plantings. Toward the southern end of the site, some of the existing trees will be retained and supplemented by additional trees that will aid in the screening of the parking garage at the southern end of the building.

Traffic and Transportation:

The transportation impact for the Tower Oaks development was evaluated during review and approval of the Concept Plan application. The Resolution of Approval for the Concept Plan sets forth the staging of development and the triggering mechanisms for transportation improvements. These improvements have been completed by the applicant, Tower-Dawson Limited Partnership, and no further on or off-site improvements are required. A deceleration lane has been previously constructed to serve the northern site entrance along Tower Oaks Boulevard.

The application has been reviewed to improve the site's accessibility to transit users and alternative transportation modes. Staff recommends that carpool spaces be designated within the garage to encourage carpooling to the site. The site plan includes sidewalk connections between the building and the public sidewalk along Tower Oaks Boulevard. The main entrance drive includes sidewalks leading to the paved plaza as well as the parking garage. Staff has recommended that the sidewalk be separated from the driveway curb by a three-foot grass strip to enhance the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists. The other site entrance will be the primary site access for northbound travelers as well as service vehicles, and will be the primary bicycle access to the site. This driveway will be 26 feet wide and be signed for bicycles. To enhance use of bicycles for commuting, the applicant has agreed to provide bicycle lockers and shower facilities in the building. Bicycle storage areas have been located close to the elevator on the lower (easiest to access) level of the parking garage. A fitness center will be provided, likely in the lower level of the trading floor building, that will provide showers that can be used by bicycle commuters.

Stormwater Management/Utilities:

The stormwater management concept plan for this site has been approved by the Department of Public Works. Quantity control will be provided through underground storage pipes beneath the southern entrance driveway. Quality control will be provided by two sand filters. Public sewer and water service will be provided by the City. Permanent electrical service to the building will be provided via underground conduit along Preserve Parkway from the Montrose Road area. To ensure a continuous source of power for the trading floor, a secondary source of power will be available. Emergency generators and transformers for this project will be placed along the retaining wall of the loading dock area, parallel to Wootton Parkway and out of view from public roadways. The transformers will be placed underground, and the generators will be placed in an enclosure with noise attenuating features. The applicant commissioned a study of the noise expected to emanate from the generators, and determined that appropriate noise control would mitigate any negative impacts on proximate residences.

Notification:

Notification letters were sent to the presidents of the following Citizens Associations: North Farm, Hungerford Stoneridge, New Mark Commons, Falls Ridge, Potomac Springs and The Villages at Tower Oaks. Residents of Hungerford-Stoneridge south of West Edmonston Drive and residents of the southern portion of New Mark Commons, the Villages at Tower Oaks, and North Farm were notified, in addition to adjacent property owners, of this Planning Commission meeting date.

Conclusion:

The proposal conforms to all pertinent requirements of the Zoning Ordinance, the guidelines and

conditions contained in the approved Concept Plan, and the Schematic Design Plan. Therefore, staff is recommending approval of Detailed Application CPD2000-0001I, subject to the recommended conditions of approval.

Attachments

1. Vicinity Map
2. Application
3. Site and Landscaping Plans
4. Elevations, Plans and Sections
5. Traffic Statement

/rjw

Vicinity Map

